

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image-forming apparatus comprising:

an image-forming unit disposed so as to be detachably attached to an apparatus body;

at least one sheet supply unit disposed at a lower portion of the apparatus body so as to be located below the image-forming unit for supplying a sheet, and including a sheet tray detachably attached to a body of the sheet supply unit; and

a sheet carrying system including a sheet carrying path extending substantially vertically in the apparatus body so that the sheet supplied from the sheet supply unit is carried to an image-forming region of the image-forming unit and then ejected, wherein

the apparatus body is provided with openings formed at its top and bottom portions; and

a spatial portion communicating with the openings at the top and bottom portions of the apparatus body and facing at least one part of the sheet carrying path is formed when the image-forming unit and the sheet tray of each sheet supply unit are detached from the apparatus body.

2. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the apparatus body has only a box body of standard specification.

3. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the apparatus body has a box body of standard specification, and at least one unit body of the sheet supply unit as an optional unit disposed at a lower portion of the box body.

4. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the top opening of the apparatus body serves also as an opening for an operation of attaching/detaching the image-forming unit and is opened/closed by an opening/closing cover.

5. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the unit body of the sheet supply unit has communication openings at its upper and lower walls.

6. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein the sheet supply unit as an optional unit has a positioning mechanism by which the sheet supply unit can be positioned relative to the box body of standard specification.

7. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein the sheet supply unit as an optional unit has a positioning mechanism by which a plurality of sheet supply units

can be disposed multistageously.

8. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the sheet supply unit has separate constituent elements of a sheet feed device extending both to the unit body and to the sheet tray.

9. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein unit body-side elements of the sheet feed device are disposed so that postures of the unit body-side elements can be changed.

10. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising an exposure device disposed so as to be fixed to the apparatus body, wherein:

the image-forming unit is a process cartridge using electrophotography; and

the exposure device is provided for writing an electrostatic latent image in an image carrier of the process cartridge.

11. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 10, further comprising a power supply breaker for breaking power supply to the exposure device under the condition that either the process cartridge or the sheet tray of at least one sheet

supply unit is detached.

12. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 10, further comprising:

a power supply breaker for breaking power supply to the exposure device under the condition that the process cartridge is detached; and

a light shielding member for interrupting a view field connecting a sheet tray insertion hole of each unit body at least to an optical path of the exposure device when the sheet tray is detached from the unit body of each sheet supply unit.

13. An image-forming apparatus according to Claim 10, provided with multi-stage sheet supply units and further comprising:

a power supply breaker for allowing power supply to the exposure device when at least one of the sheet trays of the multi-stage sheet supply units is attached, but breaking power supply to the exposure device when the process cartridge is detached or all the sheet trays of the sheet supply units are detached; and

a light shielding member for interrupting a view field connecting a sheet tray insertion hole of each unit body to an optical path of the exposure device when the sheet tray is detached from the unit body of each sheet supply unit.